NUMB. XII.

The Prompter.

To be Continued TUESDAYS and FRIDAYS.

Beware of PAPISHES, — *and learn to* KNIT.
POPE's, What d'ye call it.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20. 1734.

I HAVE borrow'd the *Motto* to this Paper, from a *Claſſick*, of the *Lateſt Edition*; becauſe I propoſe to draw from it an Example, in Favour of the Uſefulneſs and Significance of our *Modern Writers*; againſt the Obſtinate Partiality of ſome weak *Dotards*, who, when once they are grown *old*, *Themſelves*, can reliſh nothing, but *Antiquity*.

I AM not deſirous of *Beating* the *Golden* Senſe of my Author, into *Leafineſs*; or drawing out its *Wyre* into Lengths too *thready*. — I might, elſe, from the well known *Averſion* of *this Writer* to the Religion, and Intereſts, of *Rome*, take Occaſion to hint at a *cover'd*, and *political*, Senſe, in the Uſe of the Word *Knit*, as applied in the Verſe before us: Wherein (tho' *tacitely*, and without the Glare of *Profeſſion*) This *Advice*, of a *Watchful Patriot*, is *alluſively* pointed to, by its ſo immediately ſucceeding, to his *Caveat againſt* PAPISHES, — That All SHE Lovers of the *Proteſtant* Intereſt, ſhou'd *knit* themſelves together, in Siſterly Love, againſt the Encroachments of *Popery*; becauſe it has a Violent Tendency toward *Unravelling*, as well *Themſelves*, as their *Country*.

BUT it were *endleſs* to diverſify the Lights, in which this brief, but beautiful, Inſtruction, might be *differently conſider'd*: So, I content myſelf to explain it, in its cleareſt, and *moſt obvious*, Purpoſe, — and that is, in the Recommendation of a Certain *adventurous Connexion*, or *knitting together*, (as in the very Line, that conveys the Leſſon) *two Ideas*, at firſt Sight, *not ſimilar*; in order to enforce *one* Purpoſe.

IT wou'd have pleas'd me, had I been able to aſſert, that the Propagation of this admirable Art, of *Compelling Reſemblances*, was originally owing, to this humorous, and *well knit*, Precept, and Example, of our Author: But, to confeſs an undeniable Truth, There has, *always*, appear'd among us, a kind of *Natural Sagacity*, from Times immemorial, to *hitch-in* Oppoſitions, and *reconcile* 'em, to our various Occaſions: And I ſhall never be able to ſpeak without *Reverence*, of That Invincible Logician, of *Kent*, whoſe Happy Talent, this way, has tranſmitted to our Days, a *Proverb*, ſo illuſtrative of the Doctrine before us, as *Tenterden-Steeple is the Cauſe of Goodwin-Sands!* — "When I was "a School-boy, (ſaid this, *True-born Engliſh*, *Diſcerner*,) I remember very well, — that *Tenterden* "*Church*, had *no Steeple*; and, at That very Time, "I remember too, that there was *no* ſuch *Place* as "*Goodwin-Sands*: — Yet, it comes into my Mind, "as clearly as if I ſaw it but Yeſterday, that, as "ſoon, as I came back, *from the Univerſity*, the "*Steeple* was juſt finiſh'd; and, *Thoſe Sands*, were "talk'd of, by Every-body: — THEREFORE, it "muſt be *manifeſt*, to all *thinking* Men, that *Tenterden-Steeple*, is the CAUSE of *Goodwin-Sands*.

I, WHO am for Robbing No-body of the Applauſe that is Due to his *Merit*, have therefore commemorated this Claim of one of our ingenious Countrymen, of paſt Ages, to the Skill of *Incorporating Repugnancies*; But I dare not carry it ſo far, as to compare the *Dawn* of ſuch *faint* Luminaries, to the diffuſive *Sun-ſhine* of our *Modern Reaſoners!* And indeed, I reckon it, among the Beſt Benefits ariſing from our *Political Contentions*, that Both the Aſſaulters, and Defenders, of *Miniſtry*, have diſtinguiſh'd themſelves, to a Degree of Aſtoniſhment, by the Improvements they had the Dexterity to make, in ſo Elegant an Art; for Adornment, and Support, of their Arguments.

TO what cou'd it have been owing, if not to the Art I have recommended, that ſome of theſe keen-ſcented *Huntſmen*, have lately ſtarted *Popery*, and *Murder*, out of the ſame *beaten Buſh*, wherein Charity, and Health, had been *fallen upon*, a few Weeks before, by an Eminent *Pillar* of Our *Law*? — My righteous Spirit *riſes*, againſt this Wicked WARD, and his PILL, ever ſince Theſe ingenious *Decypherers* have made it ſo ſurprizingly Probable, that *Antimony* has been tranſmuted into POPERY; and that *Pandora* is come over, Ambaſſadreſs, from the old Lady of *Babylon*, and has brought a *Box*, and a *Bottle*, along with her; to *poiſon* us, in Behalf of *French* Politicks, and *purge off* thoſe OBSTINATE HUMOURS, which are the Support of the Proteſtant Succeſſion.

MY Comfort, againſt *all Roman Politicks* (I except the *Encouragement of Italian Opera*) is the Dependence I have, on the *Logick*, and Loyalty, of ſome faſt Friends to their Country, on *both* Sides; who will not fail to detect, and expoſe, whatever Emiſſaries can be ſent over, on ſuch *provoking*, and *inſidious*, Errands, as to *work off* the Strength of our *Conſtitution*, at *all* her *Emunctories*. — Let me, however, beg Pardon, for humbly offering ſo unneceſſary a *Mite* as my *Own*, for Diſcovery of a COUNTERPOISON, which came over, providentially, *mix'd up with the Pill*, by a *Galenical* Angel, in our Intereſt, an Enemy to all *Chymic Corroders*, who wou'd mortify, the *Bowels* of a *Country*. — Now, this undreamt of *Corrective* lies, *conceal'd*, in the very Words, WARD's PILL; and, as I ſaid but now, was brought over with it, *unknown* to the *Bearer*: Pray, *mark* the *cabaliſtical* Importance of the Letters! — [W] *watch* — [A] — *and* — [R] — *reſiſt* — [D] — *dear* — [S] — *Sons of* BRITAIN [Here, if any Body objects that I make bold with a B, that is not among the Reſt of the Letters, let him know himſelf to be miſtaken; for, It was *Lying ready*, at the Bottom of my Paper] — [P] — *Popery* — [I] — *is* — [L L] — *let looſe amongſt Ye*.

SO far, All is right: The *Antidote*, will, at leaſt, be found as *ſtrong* as the *Poiſon*. But ſuch is the Frailty of our Natures, that the Nobleſt Arts are liable to be applied to the moſt *ridiculous* Uſes. — Hence, by too violent a STRAIN, upon this Knack of *Connecting Contraries*, Things are, ſometimes, carried ſo far, that Men *aſſociate Oppoſitions*, with a View to *divide Reſemblances*. — This is manifeſt, very clearly, in a moſt ridiculouſly miſtaken Attack, that was made, upon me, by a Paper, *profeſſing*

feſſing, as I do, the Love of *Truth*, *Reaſon*, and *Liberty*. — I find, the Spirit of *Politicks*, like the Spirit of *Wine*, is a *Cordial*, in a moderate *Dram*; yet, when it gets, too *copiouſly*, into the Brain, It is apt to *inflame* the Underſtanding; and make Honeſt Folks *ſee Double*; till, miſtaking their Shadows, for *Enemies*, they *knock one another Down*, in their Error, and *fall aſleep*, in the Triumph of *Victory*.

I HAVE have heard of a *Jacobite Gunſmith*, who was ſo *indiſcrete*, in his *Loyalty*, that He parted Beds from His Wife, becauſe her Father's Name was WILLIAM, and ſhe wou'd not confeſs, before Company, that W, was a *ſcandalous Letter*. — The Inſtance is a little Extravagant, but may be *match'd*, in all Times of *Diviſion*; when the only way, for an *Indolent Neutraliſt*, to be ſafe, between Oppoſite Parties, is to laugh at *Extremes*, on both Sides; but hold *no Converſation*, with *Either*.

WHEN the Civil War, was breaking out, about the Middle of laſt Century, there liv'd a memorable *Small-coal Man*, in *Kent-ſtreet*, near the Borough of *Southwark*; who had loſt moſt of his Cuſtomers, by Endeavouring to be *Civil* to *All*. — The Good Women, on the *King's Side*, would buy no *Small-coal*, of a *Rogue*, that convers'd with the *Round Heads*: And the *Parliament Good Houſewives*, withdrew their Penny a Week, from an *ungodly Incendiary*, that *ſold Fire*, to the *Royſters*. — What ſhou'd a poor Devil do, under this terrible *Dilemma*? — He took it *wiſely* into his Head, to *turn Ideot*; and left off his Trade. — He anſwer'd Queſtions, with inarticulate Sounds; and *grinn'd Approbation*, alike, to Every *Buſier Fool* in his Pariſh. — The Conſequence fell out to his Wiſh. — *Both Sides* took STUPIDITY into Protection: The *Puritans*, becauſe this Loſs of his *Wits* was a viſible *Judgment*, *from Heaven*: — And the *Royaliſts*, becauſe he *ran mad*, from too quick a *Senſe of the Times*. So, the ſubtle Politician liv'd, in Plenty, and Indolence, upon the *Weakneſs of Factious Partiality*.

TO apply, for Concluſion, the *Uſe* of That Art, we began with the *Praiſe* of, It is the cleareſt Caſe in the World, that the Introducers of *Italian Opera*, had this politic *Small-coal Man* in their Eye, and have ſucceeded by his laudable Example. — For, when they found, TRAGEDY had too much *Meaning*, and COMEDY too much *Licence*, — that *one* would ſee no *melancholy* Scenes, becauſe there was *Sorrow* enough at *Home*, and he came to a Play to be MERRY. — And that *Another* kept his Family from *Farces*, and *Comic* Amuſements, becauſe they were *Light*, and *Indecent*, and gave Hints to *attentive Wives*, how to *cuckold* their *Husbands*, *politely*: Between two ſuch oppoſite *Extremes*, in comes IDEOT, the OPERA; and profeſſing *No Senſe at all*, reconcil'd a pleas'd World to its *Medium*: And, with This *unoffending Inſipid*, Men of Quality, of *all Diſtinctions*, have learn'd to live, as they do with their *Wives*, in a kind of *lull'd Senſibility*; juſt awake enough to *know*, *they are together*; but too inattentive, to *Examine Particulars*.

THE following Letter, I publiſh, *verbatim*, as I receiv'd it; tho' I am at a Loſs, in my Judgment, whether I ought to conſider it, as a *Real*, or *Ironical*, Defence of the Cauſe it eſpouſes.

To the Author of the Prompter.

Mr. Prompter,

" YOUR Paper of the 13th Inſtant, methinks, " is very *aſſuming*, and you ſeem to be inconſiderately hurried into a Slander, which the Peo" ple at preſent, and particularly thoſe of Diſtinc" tion, by no means deſerve.

" YOU attribute the Emptyneſs of the Boxes, at " a late Tragedy, to a *want* of *Taſte* amongſt the " *People* of *Faſhion*; whereas it proceeded from a " *quite oppoſite* Cauſe. It was occaſion'd by their " *juſt Indignation*, to think that an *Engliſh Theatre*, " and an *Engliſh Audience*, ſhou'd be beholding, for " a Night's Entertainment, to an indifferent Tranſla" tion, from no wonderful *French* Original.

" IF you, or any other Perſon of Genius, wou'd " pleaſe to produce any thing of real Merit, I make " no doubt but you wou'd have Reaſon to triumph " in *a ſix Nights Suſpenſion from Grimaces and* " *Obſcenity*.

" IT wou'd *indeed* be an Argument of the Uni" verſal Depravity of Taſte, and good Judgment, " *were* our Theatres crowded to hear the *Patch*" *work* Entertainments of modern *Comedies*, and " *Farces*; and tho' ſome are allur'd thither to divert " themſelves with the *graceful Motion* of *fine* " *Dancers*, and *mute Harlequinery*, and *Pierrotiſm*, " you muſt confeſs, that ſuch *Dumb* Action is " more pleaſing than noiſy, lifeleſs, Bombaſt, and " Fuſtian.

" IN ſhort, you ſeem as ignorant of the preſent " Age, as if you had liv'd two hundred Years ago: " And, ſince you acknowledge yourſelf *read* in " *Hiſtory*, I deſire you will inform me, *when* good " Senſe was more *largely diffus'd*, than *at preſent?* " For an Inſtance of which, I appeal to the Re" ception Mr. *Pope's Writings*, every where meet " with: Nay, I call *you* to witneſs, whether your " up-ſtart Paper is not cheriſh'd, in hopes it may " produce ſomething worthy of the Attention, of " People too wiſe, too well read, and too much " improv'd, to miſpend their Time on every *tri*" *vial* Production.

" THE OPERA, you ſee, is not deſerted: And " what ſo ſtrong an Indication of a *natural* good " Taſte, as a Reliſh for the Charms of Muſick? " And what ſo ſtrong an Argument of the Im" provement of *acquired* Taſte, as the Diſreliſh " for the *Repetition* of old Comedies, and anti" quated Tragedies, and new Farces?

Yours,

St. James's Coffee-houſe.

Petronius Arbiter.

IF the Author of this Letter is in *Earneſt*, The *People of Diſtinction* are more oblig'd to him, than they ought to have been. — As I have not yet *read* the *Tragedy*, whoſe Tranſlator, and whoſe Author, have ſo little to thank him for, I will wait till I *have*, before I take upon me the *Defence* of it. — But I *ſmile*, to obſerve, that it is with a *juſt Indignation* we muſt *reject* the *French Wit*; while we may *receive* the *French Folly*, with all the *Reſpect*, that is due to *their Faſhions*.

I AM glad, He confeſſes, that *it wou'd be a Proof of Univerſal Depravity of Judgment and Taſte, were our Theatres crowded to hear the Patch-work of modern Comedies, and Farces*: 'Since It is manifeſt to Every-body, that They ARE ALWAYS CROWDED, upon (and *'rarely but* upon) ſuch *Important* Occaſions. — It ſhou'd ſeem, therefore, my *Correſpondent* is *more Ignorant of the Preſent Age*, than the *Prompter*. — As to his Queſtion, WHEN *Good Taſte was more* LARGELY DIFFUS'D, *than at preſent*, I will anſwer it, ſoon, to his fulleſt Satisfaction. — I will conſider, at the ſame Time, his Appeal, to the Reception of *Mr. Pope's Writings*, as a *Proof* of this *Good Taſte*, in the *Publick*: And, if I can aſſign no *leſs Reaſonable Cauſe* of the Laſt, than their JUDGMENT, I ſhall give up my *Cenſure*. We have certainly *ſome Good Taſte*, in the Nation, but it is too LARGELY DIFFUS'D, to be found, in ſo *collected* a Body, as one of this Gentleman's OPERA *Audiences*; whoſe Taſte He miſrepreſents, when He calls it a Reliſh for the *Charms* — He ſhou'd have ſaid, the TITILLATIONS, of *Muſick*.

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